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140821Z Dec 01

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	EVG-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	USNW-00
	DODE-00	DOFE-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	NSAE-00	TEST-00	USIE-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-02	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/003W		
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0542

UNCLAS HARARE 003724

SIPDIS

INFO INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

DEPT FOR AF, AF/S (DELISI, KRAFT), AF/RA (SWANN), AF/PD
(COX, ROBERTSON)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWEAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF A/S KANSTEINER
VISIT

1. SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY KANSTEINER'S DECEMBER 8-11 VISIT TO ZIMBABWE GENERATED COVERAGE IN BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA. REPORTS IN PRIVATELY OWNED PRINT MEDIA WERE FACTUAL. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED ZIMBABWE BROADCASTING CORPORATION DISTORTED ITS COVERAGE TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE UNITED STATES IS ATTEMPTING TO BULLY ZIMBABWE. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRINT MEDIA IGNORED KANSTEINER'S VISIT. ASSISTANCE FROM EMBASSY PRETORIA HELPED GET FACTUAL RADIO AND TV COVERAGE OF KANSTEINER'S STATEMENTS TO INFLUENTIAL ZIMBABWEAN AUDIENCES. END SUMMARY.

2. ON DECEMBER 12, THE INDEPENDENT "DAILY NEWS" PUBLISHED A STRAIGHT ACCOUNT OF A/S KANSTEINER'S DECEMBER 11 PRESS CONFERENCE IN HARARE. UNDER THE HEADLINE "US ENVOY ENCOURAGES ZIMBABWE TO STEER TOWARD DEMOCRACY" THE PAPER'S POLITICAL EDITOR OFFERED AN ACCURATE REPORT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE AND DETAILS OF KANSTEINER'S VISIT TO ZIMBABWE. INDEPENDENT WEEKLY "THE FINANCIAL GAZETTE" ALSO PUBLISHED A COMPLETE AND FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF KANSTEINER'S PRESS CONFERENCE UNDER THE HEADLINE "US OFFICIAL LAMBASTS (SIC) GOVERNMENT OVER RULE OF LAW." SUBHEAD READ: "A SENIOR US OFFICIAL SAID THIS WEEK THE RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF ZIMBABWEANS WERE UNDER THREAT, BUT THERE IS STILL TIME FOR PRESIDENT ROBERT MUGABE'S GOVERNMENT TO STEER THE COUNTRY TOWARD FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR." THE "FINANCIAL GAZETTE" ALSO PUBLISHED A FAVORABLE STORY ON US POLICY TOWARD ZIMBABWE. THAT ARTICLE WAS BASED ON AN EMBASSY PRESS RELEASE ABOUT ZDERA, DISTRIBUTED AT THE KANSTEINER PRESS CONFERENCE AND TO A BROAD GROUP OF INFLUENTIAL ZIMBABWEANS. COPIES OF THE "DAILY NEWS" AND "FINANCIAL GAZETTE" ARTICLES HAVE BEEN FAXED TO AF/S AND AF/PD.

3. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED ZIMBABWE BROADCASTING CORPORATION (ZBC) TV AND RADIO COVERAGE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS BLATANTLY DISTORTED AND HEAVILY
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POLITICIZED. IN ITS SEPTEMBER 11 PRIME-TIME NEWS PROGRAM, ZBC TV REPORTED THAT KANSTEINER HAD CALLED FOR SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PARLIAMENTARY FORUM OBSERVATION OF ZIMBABWE'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THE REPORTER SAID THAT THIS WAS "IN COMPLETE VIOLATION OF ZIMBABWE'S CONSTITUTION." THE REPORT WAS FALSE, AS KANSTEINER MADE NO MENTION OF SADC OBSERVATION OF ZIMBABWEAN ELECTIONS. HE DID SUGGEST THAT SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR ELECTIONS WOULD PROVIDE A GOOD BENCHMARK FOR EVALUATING THE FAIRNESS OF ZIMBABWE'S ELECTIONS, BUT THE ZBC SEEMS TO HAVE MISSED THE POINT. NONE OF THE OTHER 17 NEWS ORGANIZATIONS AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE MISUNDERSTOOD KANSTEINER'S STATEMENTS. THE EMBASSY RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY TO THIS DISTORTION WITH A PRESS RELEASE CORRECTING THE ZBC'S REPORT. ZBC TV AND RADIO COVERAGE OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE ALSO INCLUDED HEAVY EDITORIALIZING, CLAIMING THAT U.S. POLICY TOWARD ZIMBABWE WAS "ILLEGAL," THAT ZDERA WOULD HURT THE COMMON CITIZEN, AND THAT AMERICAN CRITICISM OF ZIMBABWE WAS DUE TO OPPOSITION TO LAND REFORM.

14. GOVERNMENT-OWNED NEWSPAPERS FAILED TO REPORT ON THE KANSTEINER VISIT. A/S KANSTEINER CEREMONIALLY DELIVERED USG DONATIONS TO LOCAL HIV/AIDS ORGANIZATIONS, BUT THE "HERALD" REPORT ON THE DONATION SOMEHOW OMITTED MENTION OF HIS PRESENCE AT THE CEREMONY.

15. A/S KANSTEINER ALSO GAVE INTERVIEWS TO THE BBC, E-TV AND THE SABC DURING HIS VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA.
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THESE BROADCASTS REACHED ZIMBABWEAN ELITE THROUGH SATELLITE TELEVISION AND SHORT-WAVE RADIO, AND HELPED GIVE OPINION